

Message Text

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R 111351Z DEC 74

FM AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4892

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMCONSUL JERUSALEM

AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L TEL AVIV 7161

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PINS, IS, JO

SUBJ: ISRAELI PRESS ON SENTENCING OF ARCHBISHOP CAPUCCI

REF: JERUSALEM 2116 (NOTAL)

1. ISRAELI PRESS HAS SEIZED ON TERMINATION OF CAPUCCI TRIAL AND IMPOSITION OF 12-YEAR PRISON TERM TO PAY TRIBUTE TO ISRAELI JUDICIAL SYSTEM. NEWSPAPERS COMMENTING THUS FAR MAKE MUCH OF FACT THAT CAPUCCI, ALTHOUGH WORKING FOR ORGANIZATION DEDICATED TO DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL, RECEIVED FAIR AND DISPASSIONATE TRIAL. PRESS ALSO FINDS 12-YEAR SENTENCE LENIENT, IN VIEW OF MAXIMUM 35-YEAR TERM REQUESTED BY PROSECUTION, AND ATTRIBUTES THIS TO COURT'S DEFERENCE TO CAPUCCI'S CLERICAL STATUS.

2. JERUSALEM POST EDITORIAL COMPARES CAPUCCI UNFAVORABLY WITH FORMER ARCHBISHOP OF GALILEE (ISRAEL PROPER) YUSSUF RAYA, WHO RECENTLY RESIGNED TO RETURN TO US. POST MAKES POINT THAT RAYA ALSO DIFFERED WITH GOI ON MATTERS OF POLICY, ESPECIALLY
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EXPULSION OF GREEK CATHOLICS FROM TWO VILLAGES IN NORTH OF ISRAEL,

BUT DID NOT RESORT TO ASSISTING TERRORISTS TO ACHIEVE HIS ENDS.

3. DAVAR EDITORIAL SAYS IT MAY NOW BE WORTH CONSIDERING EXPULSION OF CAPUCCI, SINCE TO LEAVE HIM IN ISRAELI PRISON FOR TWELVE YEARS WOULD ONLY TURN HIM INTO MARTYR AND PROVOKE TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS TO ATTEMPT TO EXTORT HIS RELEASE.

4. COMMENT. ISRAELI DETERMINATION TO MAKE CAPUCCI CASE PURELY JUDICIAL AFFAIR IN FACE OF DEFENSE EFFORT TO POLITICIZE IT WAS INEVITABLE. GIVEN EVIDENCE AGAINST CAPUCCI, ISRAELIS WERE ABLE TO PROCEED ON BASIS OF STRONG COURTROOM PRESENTATION. EVEN SO, IN VIEW OF EXTENSIVE PUBLIC ATTENTION TO PLO AT UNGA AND TERRORIST INCIDENTS DURING PERIOD OF TRIAL, IT IS NOT WORTHY THAT ISRAELIS CONDUCTED PROCEEDINGS IN SUCH A WAY THAT ATTEMPT AT POLITICIZATION DID NOT SUCCEED. IN FACT, CAPUCCI CASE, ASIDE FROM FEW MOST IMPORTANT SESSIONS, HAS NOT BEEN HEAVILY COVERED BY ISRAELI MEDIA, REFLECTING APPARENT LACK OF SIGNIFICANT PUBLIC INTEREST IN MATTER. IN SPITE OF OFFICIAL DISCLAIMERS, WE DOUBT THAT CAPUCCI WILL BE IMPRISONED FOR FULL TERM OF SENTENCE AND SUSPECT HE WILL BE QUIETLY EXPELLED FROM ISRAEL AFTER REASONABLE PASSAGE OF TIME.

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